

Ground Rules for Effective Groups

1. Test assumptions and inferences.

- Assume – take for granted without testing
- Infer – draw conclusions about something that you don't know based on things that you do know

2. Share all relevant information.

Sharing relevant information means that all team members have a common base of information on which to make informed choices.

3. Use specific examples and agree on what important words mean.

Using specific examples and agreeing on what words mean is one way to share relevant information, generate valid data and create a common understanding.

4. Explain your reasoning and intent.

Explaining your reasoning and intent behind your statements and questions, helps to avoid misinterpretation of what you say and how you act.

5. Focus on interests, not positions.

Interests are the needs and desires that people have in regard to a given situation. Positions or solutions are the way that people meet their interests.

6. Combine advocacy and inquiry.

Make statements and ask questions.

7. Jointly design next steps and ways to test disagreements.

If group members cannot agree upon something, they may be able to agree upon a way of testing who is correct. The test may be as simple as checking the validity of a piece of information after the meeting.

8. Discuss undiscussable issues.

Undiscussable issues are ones that are relevant to the group's task but that group members believe they can't discuss openly without some negative consequences.

9. Use a decision making rule that generates the level of commitment needed.

Decide on the most appropriate way to make decisions, have a fall back if necessary.